



Trinidad Carnival 2019 Band Reviews

Band: Tribe Carnival

Not even gonna hold you, I'm here to tell Tribe and Air Committee about themselves. Had my concierge pick up my costume to find that the bra I ordered was literally 2 sizes too big. I've ordered the same size for carnival before with no problem so I know it was them. I had to go back to the costume collection and have them switch out the bra. I felt really bad for the staff on hand at customer service because he was by himself for a stretch trying to make things work for a large number of people. I was able to get another bra. It still didn't fit me perfectly but I said I'm gonna make it work and I left to go on about my trip.

Carnival Monday started off fine. People didn't start coming until late so there was space in the band. Lunch was good and there was food and drinks. Issues started for me after lunch. I don't know what security was doing but why the stormers jamming up in the band next to me, please? There was literally NO space to take a wine or do much except for walk. I was most displeased but figured that was the price to pay for playing in a big big band. I thought Tuesday would be better.

GIRL. I got to the band at 9. I was feeling cute, even with my big ass bra. **TELL ME WHY I STARTED FEELING MY WINGS DANGLING AT 11 A.M.** We had not even touched the stage. I took them off to figure out what was happening and the wings just fell apart. SIS! At this point, I am just distraught. My friends were MIA so other SIAM masqueraders had to come see if they could help me. They all started trying to make me feel better about my costume because apparently all their costumes had issues as well. I had to leave my wings on a truck and move on. (By the way, I went to collect my wings from that truck at lunch and sure enough the truck was gone. When it got back after lunch, my wings were nowhere to be found. Just LOL).

I get to lunch and have to fight down people for food. Apparently they ran out??? How? I just....After lunch, ran into the same issues with space and stormers. I think I saw security remove someone maybe ONCE. SMH. I moved around to other trucks and it was like they only wanted to play the same 10 songs, especially that stupid Ashanti song. I was so disappointed because the soca this year was so good!! I left just feeling so disappointed and a bit sad. I had so much fun with the fetes I attended that I just knew the road experience would be the cherry on top.

You know I wrote an email to Tribe about everything with pictures and the like and of course, they did not respond. Craziness. I just can't believe I paid over **\$1,500 U-S-D** for an experience like that. Listen, a bitch works hard AF, okay?? I here looking for a man to sponsor me because I'm tired. So to spend that money and have to go through that. I'm not over it and probably won't be for a very long time.

I will say: **BIG UP TO KARNIVAL BY KANDI!!** Gotta be the best concierge in the business. They handled the tickets for my group, ticket and costume collection and delivery and were always so ready to answer my questions. They know about customer service and I'll continue to use them for my carnival needs.

Band: Yuma Carnival

Costume Pickup: My costume was picked up by my friends, and they reported they were in and out of costume pickup in an hour. This is a vast improvement from the 5 hour wait they had last year. The one rough patch was the back packs for the lemonade section was not ready, so they had to return for that on Saturday.

Lunch Stop: So basic, boring, and ugly. The Chinese and jerk food options were winners with my crew on both days.

Monday: Road was straight VIBES!

My only complaint is the same 15 songs being repeated the whole day, and the Yuma security guard by truck 3, who pulled me away by grabbing my hair (in braids) while I was dancing next to the truck. He said i was too close to the wheels, but pulling me away by grabbing my hair is inexcusable. A simple tap on the shoulder would have sufficed.

Tuesday: Lawd we were a beautiful band. The gyals and di man dem came out and showed out in dem costumes. VIBES were on point. Same 15 songs being played over and over, but we had a time. The one rough patch on Tuesday, was being stuck behind another band passing us for an hour and a half. With our band not moving, and the spectators crowding us, movement was slim to none, and it was a miserable period. As soon as that ended though, we went back to jumping like a famalay!

Overall I give Yuma a solid 7/10. Way better than last year. I definitely plan on returning in 2020.

Band: Tribe Carnival

I received my Venezia costume via is.wecarnival concierge and they were great! The venezia frontline costume was beautiful and one of the highest quality costumes I've ever gotten (bodywear wise)! There was one leg strap missing but I cut a string off another piece and was an easy fix. I'm very short and my wings dragged so I got out my hot glue gun to add the bottom feathers to the main body of my wings. Turned out great!!

Friends and I were running late so we met the band at the socadrome. I'm not surprised that Famalay won Roadmarch because they kept playing it over and over. I wish they would've play Stage Party by Destra or Judgement Stage by Patrice but whatever, machel was live so I get it. At the end of the stage I noticed another venezia frontliner looking distressed and it turns out her wings broke in half. I tried my best to help her fix it. 2 hours later the same thing happened to me. Very displeased. I had to bend the wires of the backpack to stay in place. I was fully expecting a Costume Alterations tent at the lunch stop but unfortunately there wasn't one. Very disappointing especially with how much Frontline costs in Tribe. There's no incentives for being frontline unless you happen to be in the "right" sections.

The road with Tribe was much too hectic. Besides the blatant disrespect from security constantly pushing through wings and masqueraders, there was rarely enough room for me to truly get on bad and enjoy the road. Instead, it felt more like a mosh pit. I've always been curious about Tribe and it's safe to say curiosity killed the cat. Never again.

Band: Tribe Carnival

Tribe is a nice band with vibes, good DJs, and pretty costumes. It's a big band with plenty of people on the road which can be overcrowded. I was highly disappointed this year with the disorganization of the staff and management of Tribe. I had to make the best of bad situation on the road. The costume collection, food supply, and logistics on the road were terrible.

Tribe staff and management was not prepared and did not have enough staff for the large inflow of people picking costumes, needing adjustments, or just simply paying for costumes. Patrons were not notified in advance that only cash payment is accepted for pickup. Patrons that paid in advance waited in extremely long lines for pick up and there was no chronological order for female/male pickup and even express lines were very disorganized. For patrons, that need costume adjustments or general customer service of their costume were not even assisted at all.

Tribe customer service staff were not in even present for service they were short staff. It was basically fill out a form and we will never get back to you. I waited over 5 hours twice for costume adjustments, backpack, and never ever received any service. They stated they were short staff like WTF your business is carnival! Oh forget it, if you need lil glue for your costume.

Even on the road there were not enough drink trucks or bathroom trucks for customers. Drink trucks ran out plastic cups early and could not handle the influx of people on the road. During lunch time, they ran out of food early and many people were furiously hungry and looking for food. There was not even enough vegan options for people that didn't eat meat either. These incidents for a big band need to be improved because people pay way too much money to not have great service.

Bliss Carnival [and some fetes]

I'm carnival virgin went to Trinidad to celebrate my 30th birthday. By far one of the best decisions I made in my 30 years of living! It was magical! I'm having withdraws and already trying to planning which year I can go back.

I went to Soca Brainwash, Sunny Side Up, Beach House Cooler Fete Night Owlz Jouvert, and played mas with Bliss.

SBW was a bit annoying at first with the ticketing issue and starting late, but it made up for it in every other way. I was mad I had to leave before it ended because we had to go jouvert distribution.

SSU was top notch. The food was plentiful, and the drinks were premium as promised. The penthouse area was cute and in the perfect spot, but honestly it was a bit scary. It was an elevated stage kinda thing, and as more people started to come, it started to sway more than my liking. They even has security stopping more people from getting on at one point. But it stayed strong, and I'll be back at that penthouse my next carnival lol.

Beach House Cooler rained on and off the whole time, but it didn't stop the vibes! The staff was understanding and let us stay under the ticketing tent until the rain calmed down. Then we picked a spot for our cooler under a tent inside and only went under when the rain picked up again.

Night Owlz was disappointing. They advertised the pre-party with drinks. We got there and they weren't ready. So we sat on this wooden plank and every once in a while a chick came around and poured shots of some fruity stuff. Then they said they were getting a bathroom truck. That never happened. We ended up leaving less than an hour after they went on the road, partly because I had to use the bathroom.

Bliss: I had a friend collect my costume. She said the only thing that bothered her about distribution was the goody bag situation. When she first went to get our costumes, the goody bags weren't ready. They said they would announce when they are ready, and have different distributions points around the island. They ended up only having it at the Hilton. However, Carnival Monday and Tuesday, the best time I've ever had! I really couldn't have asked for anything better. Costumes were beautiful, drinks were overflowing, lunch was delicious, and truck 3 had the best Djs and hype man! I really didn't know what to expect, but I was very impressed. I'm a busty girl so I was very surprised my top was sized appropriately. I also opted for high waisted bottoms to hide my mom pouch, which came with a mesh part that was way too light for my skin tone. But it wasn't anything some foundation and hairspray couldn't fix. The rest stop had blankets for us to lay on under huge tents and umbrellas, an ice cream truck, sunscreen station, make up station, and foot massages! Even the bathrooms on the road I was excited about lol. They were air conditioned trailers with running water, not port-o-lets. I will always play with Bliss!

Band: Tribe Carnival

Soooo....This is my 2nd year playing with Tribe. I was in a private FL only section for the first time. This was not my first choice of costume but after seeing the pics of the women in my first choice, I wouldn't have gotten into that section anyway....Anyway, I played in Livia. My section came with Monday wear which was nice. It did not fit all that great around my waist but that was okay. I still made it work. Monday on the road was great. No issues getting drinks or lunch. Most of my friends were in the same band so it was vibes all throughout the day until I had to use the bathroom. A friend and I walked to the back of the band and there were no potty trucks to be found. We ended up going to a restaurant and had to pay to use theirs.

Tuesday... I was so excited to put on my full costume. As I was putting it on, I noticed a part of the bra broke, then after trying to fix it, the whole side broke. I had a friend help me put it back together with a hair tie and then I made my way to the road. Pieces of my costume were falling off. After getting on the road, I noticed a lot of people in my section were missing the same piece that broke on my bra. So the whole section was poorly put together. I even watched the designer's shoulder piece break in half as she tried to fix it. The costume was beautiful, just a shame that it was poorly made. We made our way to lunch after crossing the stage. I got my food and the box was feeling very "light". It was a small piece of lasagna and some bread. After meeting up with my crew, I found out none of them got food because it ran out. Smh We got back on the road and vibes were good for the remainder of the evening. For the amount of money I paid for this costume, I was expecting much better quality. I probably won't ever play in FL in Tribe again.

Ps: We need more photographers who are willing to capture images of darker skinned women. The colorism was extremely evident. I sat there and watched all the light skin women in my section get their pictures taken after crossing the stage. #dobetter

Band: Paparazzi Carnival

This was my 4th Carnival and my 3rd year playing with Paparazzi. The pick up was very organized and easy. The only thing was my friend didn't get her backpack for her costume until

Monday but other than that everything was really nice. Each year everything is continuing to improve. The fetes were amazing and I particularly loved Soca Brainwash this year. I used The Carnival Connection to arrange transportation and they were great as well. I'm looking forward to 2020 in Trinidad.

Band: Rogue

I had an awesome time playing mas with Rogue. Overall I'll give them an A-. Costume pickup was a breeze. I went on Saturday at noon and was in and out in less than 30 minutes with everything I needed, costume packaged in a sturdy box, along with a backpack, 2 cups, liquor (Campari, yuck), etc. The costume (Libertas backline) was well made and almost a perfect fit. My bra cups were a little big but that was easily remedied by tying the halter straps tighter. My costume survived a full day of getting on and off without losing any gems or decorative accents. I loved the Rogue late start, which gave me time to get a quick nap in after jouvert and make a 9am makeup appointment on Tuesday without missing any of the road. The vibes on the road were awesome. In addition to the typical songs (Famalay, Lost and Found, etc), the dj's (especially Mad Russian) mixed in a variety of lesser known hits and even an afrobeat segment on Tuesday afternoon.

Crossing the stage (Savannah on Monday, Socadrome on Tuesday) was everything!!! Truly a moment of euphoria and pure energy. The Monday night after party was awesome, a laser light fete on the Socadrome stage. I had so much fun that I barely noticed the 70,000+ steps I took on Monday. No issues with stormers and plenty of space to wine up and enjoy the vibes. No issues getting drinks, other when the trucks were turning and they made everyone move out of the way for safety reasons. They ran out of coconut water at the end of the day on Tuesday but the Johnnie never bust. Plenty of bottled water as well to stay hydrated. Security did a great job of keeping us in line (when trucks were turning, it happened a lot) and overall everyone was really nice and positive. The air conditioned rest bus was also a nice perk.

My only complaint about Rogue was the process of getting food (the fight for lunch on Tuesday felt like a zombie movie with people attacking the lunch cart) but once I got my food it was delicious (Asian fish, eggplant and rice). I missed lunch on Monday (before we started on the road) because I was late but the snack was good (chicken wings). My only other complaint was that I missed the snack on Tuesday because I didn't realize when they were serving it. In future, they should have set times for snacks that are communicated to us ahead of time and also have the dj's announce it at the music trucks. Not sure if I like the lack of a real lunch stop (we basically stopped by the side of the road) but that was known ahead of time, as it's part of what makes Rogue "alternative". On the whole, I had an amazing time and would definitely play mas with Rogue again.

Band: Paparazzi Carnival

Now, before I begin my review for Paparazzi, I have to say I played with them back in 2017 and had a great time. Everything was great. Vibes were great. Costume stayed in tact (even to this day), customer service was on point. I fell in love immediately. Enough where I felt I could be loyal to this band. Everything was A1. I mean everything.

It pains me to say this but the overall experience this time around just did not meet the mark. Now, my initial contacts via email were fast and smooth. It was relatively easy to pay for the costume. I was comfortable.

It's when I got to the band house where things went down hill.

When I was presented my costume in my box, pieces were already not together on certain parts of my costume. They had to get fixed basically right in front of me (what happened to quality control?!). My panties were made incorrectly. They fit but the way they were done, they didn't fit. ANY designer should know that when you're glueing pieces on to stretch material, you MUST stretch the item as much as possible THEN glue said pieces on. There weren't giving me much option so I had to do their job and rip pieces off my panties then glue them on WHILE they were on me so that they could fit properly.

I went to get my makeup done and as I was putting on my costume, pieces were just coming off. DIDN'T EVEN SEE THE SUN YET. I had to have the makeup artist help me figure out how to keep my costume together. Side note: BIG BIG ups to Aliya at More Than Makeup Limited TT - makeup was FLAWLESS and stayed together way better than my costume did. It did NOT think of moving until I put a makeup wipe to it 14-15 hours later.

I got on the road and I continued to fall apart. I was just collecting parts in my fanny pack. My backpiece has those long and hard fragile feathers which were beautiful at first. Before I reached the Savannah, they were throwing up gang signs. I look like I got in a fight it looked so bad. When we touched the Socadrome, NONE of us frontliners had those feathers as we all cut/broke them off. THOSE FEATHERS ARE NOT FOR THE ROAD. PLEASE STOP USING THEM.

Now, let me not sound like a complete hater YET because vibes for starting super early were right where they needed to be. Drinking flowed beautifully. Food (although it wasn't great as it was last time) was quick to get.

My costume was BEAUTIFUL. Simply beautiful. That's why I picked it. ALL of the costumes were beautiful - to look at really. They were just not road ready. At all.

Everyone that I was with were having costume issues as well.

This experience has me looking into different bands for 2021. Not sure I'll be back with Papparazzi after this experience. I spent way too much money to fall apart the way that I did.

Paparazzi definitely needs to regroup and/or get the old people back.

Why sacrifice quality just to look good for 5 minutes?

Band: Tribe Carnival

First, let me start by saying that I am a first time Tribe Masquerader, and was extremely excited to be playing with the band this year. Partly because of the band's reputation as being one of the more premier groups, but mostly because of the beautifully designed costumes.

Pick up and Costume quality:

We had one of our group members retrieve all of our costumes, and from what she reported, the pick-up experience was seamless and friendly. I still received the wrong bra in my costume package though. I specified a wire bra for my Frontline Siam order and received a large, padded bra. When I reached out to the designer to see if the error was made on account of my larger

bra size (same happened to one of our group members with similar bra sizing) I received no response. Needless to say, I was very disappointed with the lack of communication.

Monday: Vibes started off well on Carnival Monday, and like all eager Masqueraders I was ready to misbehave. Drinks were flowing, bamsies rolling; but at some point in the afternoon the Stormers invaded the band. So much so that I felt like we were outnumbered. This caused quite a bit of confusion and I cannot confidentially say that the Tribe security staff did a good enough job pulling them out of the band in a timely manner. The Security also did poorly with securing the areas around the wheels of the trucks. There were several close call incidents with Masqueraders and the wheels, that left me shaken. My group and I arrived at lunch on Monday about a half hour after the trucks pulled in. Fish meals were already done, and the food they did have left (noodles, chicken, veggies and rice) was cold and subpar. I expected more. I also felt like there weren't enough tents up to protect Masqueraders from the Sun. Two little trees in the middle of rest stop area were not enough. I would also like to suggest that in the future, Tribe label their VIP trucks better. Many Masqueraders were mistreated, yelled at and turned away from receiving refreshments such as water- when they mistakenly went to a Tribe drink truck that happened to be "VIP." How would they have known? And staff members were not patient enough in explaining this to the patrons.

But in true Carnival fashion, we all pushed forward and made the best of the rest of the road. Ending the evening strong with Mr. Killa's "Run with It" while dulling our little disappointments with Johnnie and ginger.

Tuesday: I felt renewed. My costume fit well and even though I was not pleased with the padded bra, the show had to go on. We had not been on the road for more than 20 minutes before my wings started to fall apart. I mean literally ... fall apart. I had to prop them up with my arms just to take pictures. I thought to myself, maybe I can make them last the hour. Alas, it did not make it to 45 minutes. My wings cracked in half right in the middle of my wining session on the Socadrome stage. I was heartbroken and embarrassed. Thank God for the innate and unspoken sisterhood that exists amongst women; because if it weren't for my fellow female Siam Masquraders, rushing to help repair what was left of my costume, my day would have been a wash. And in doing a quick scan of the Siam section I realized that many of the girls had broken, misshaped and drooping wings as well. In a weird way it brought us all closer together. Lol.

Much of Mas after that was a blur. I tried carrying my broken wings for a while, but finally just left them on Truck 4. They soon disappeared altogether. I had given up on them anyway. I will say, I was very satisfied with the drinks on this day. Drinks kept swinging and the Stormers were kept at bay until the late hours of the Day! So I would issue 3 stars on a decent and solid finish!

Band: Fantasy Carnival

Costume ordering/pickup:

This was done through a concierge company, so I cannot comment on the process. I will say though prior to this we did have one hiccup with the band. For whatever reason, they opted to discontinue a few of the costumes including one my friend had ordered. They however neglected to inform her (or our concierge service) of this. We found out in a round about way (BIG NO). When we communicated this to our concierge, they contacted the band. We were told they apologized profusely and were very accommodating in figuring out a solution.

Goodie bag: Fairly standard I guess. A surprise was the inclusion of a swimmy for Monday Wear. The fit of the swimmy would have been great if one had limited portions of bamsie and/or boobs. Since my friends and I don't belong to that club, and we had already bought a Monday wear outfit, we donated it to someone who it would suit.

Carnival Monday:

This is also going to be true for Tuesday - the DJs particularly those attached to Truck 1, were not great. At all. We had a steady stream of 5 to 6 songs that were played for most of the day. My group started out fairly late on the road, but just in time for lunch :). Lunch stop was the Queens Park Oval. Lunch pick up was a bit chaotic, but the clusters of people moved fairly efficiently. The food was delicious. We got really well seasoned and cooked food. I was impressed with the quality of the mass produced meals. I also appreciated being able to use an actual restroom (vs a portable one). There were makeup touch up and foot massage stations available if needed. After lunch, the music was not great. Actually, awful. I feel like after eating, and knowing that folks struggling with ethnic fatigue and general fatigue tbh, playing low energy music is NOT IT. But that's what we got. It really got to the point where my friends and I were legit ready to leave. Then we were lucky to intersect with another band's truck for some vibes. That saved the day and prolonged the pumping.

Carnival Tuesday:

My friends and I all got the Valkyrie midline costume. It was GORGEOUS! It looked better in person than in pics >>>>. Both quality and fit were great! There were a million components and you needed every hand and brain working together to put it together correctly. Most importantly, every component stayed in tact throughout Tuesday. The wings were comfy and light and we kept them on for the entire day. We got on the road slightly before the band was about to cross the stage. Crossing the stage is a unique experience: the energy, the camaraderie, the euphoria are unforgettable. Only issue here: because we got on the road right before we got on the stage, we weren't able to get to a drinks truck until after we crossed the stage, which took about 40 minutes or so. The sun was dread and we were PARCHED. Big up the Fantasy Hype man who rescued us with some bottled water. We coulda used some rum and coconut water, but hey. After the stage, we chipped for a bit until lunch. Much like Tuesday, the DJing was sub-par. Admittedly, we were close to truck 1 for much of the road because we liked having space to maneuver so maybe the other trucks were better. When we did interact with them - when getting drinks, or when using the bathroom truck - it sounded like much of the same. The lunch stop was a bit more chaotic on Tuesday, but the crowd moved and again, the food was delicious. After lunch, our strategy was really to attach ourselves to a band other than ours for music and vibes. This was the BEST decision. We had a BLAST and went back and forth to our band for drinks. Big up rum and coconut water for being our best friend on the road.

Overall Carnival Experience:

This was my first time jumping in any carnival so I opted to go through a concierge service. The concierge served its purpose in making planning easier for fairly large group. We didn't have to worry about coordination of accommodations or picking up costumes. That convenience was clutch: A+. Communication and transportation coordination from the concierge though...as solid D.

For future carnivals, cus I DEFINITELY coming back (!!) I would not opt to use the same concierge service I used this time around. There were enough snafus for me to know not to make the same mistake twice.

My experience with Fantasy was A+ in every aspect EXCEPT the music on the road, which gets a C-. Music and vibes are super important. Next trip to Trinidad Carnival, we'll head over to Tribe - they seemed to have both visuals and vibes covered well.

Band: Paparazzi Carnival

Package Collection

A complete and utter mess. Firstly, my costume (Amore FL) was among the first costumes scheduled to be distributed with a pick up time of 12-5pm. Ok, fair enough.

Now tell me why these people calling me at 11am on the costume distribution day to tell me that the costume not ready AND I already pay in full. So they proposed I come a little later @ 4 to collect the costume because they're doing last minute adjustments. I had a little fete I was going in the evening so I told them to take their time and instead of rushing to make the adjustments i'd pick it up on Monday/Tuesday. **Hello! Hi!** Tuesday they ain't ready with the monokini and gave me some bullshit reason like, "oh the beading is giving the seamstress difficulty to attach... so it's taking a little longer than anticipated. Everything else is ready tho..." I was allowed to collect my backpack and other items while they promised to deliver the bodysuit to me on Friday (tiny win).

The backpack  So pretty but why within a minute of getting the thing they hadda hot glue one of the feathers. Excuse! So I ended up switching the backpack for a sturdier one.

The only upside was that on Thursday they called and let me know the monokini was ready and they were decent enough to arrange a drop off in my area.

My friends who were also playing mas went to collect their costumes on the final day (Saturday) and I don't even know how to begin describing their struggle ... one of them only got their backpack on Sunday afternoon.

Carnival Monday & Tuesday

Besssss... great vibes. My friends complained about the music selection but honestly I had a good time. Access to food and alcohol was a complete breeze... I even had a few bartenders who remembered what I was drinking so all I had to do was present my cup.

When I broke my cup on the first day from jumping up too much they were nice enough to bring me a new cup for Tuesday (Yay!)... I was grateful. Admittedly the food options could have been better but we could work with it and the lunch spot it was a nice little cool down .

Security was also good... there were no stormers and the security were generally helpful. One even saved me when the wind threatened to send me and my backpack flying on Tuesday.

Conclusion

If Paparazzi evvvveeeerrr see me again for carnival I would be mad. Too much bacchanal for a costume that ain't free... I will not put myself through that again. I honestly don't know what went wrong this year regarding the costume collection because I heard it was a breeze last year. Maybe I just salt like Lot's wife.

Band: Lost Tribe

Costume pick up

Pick was easy. I paid off my costume before arriving in trinidad so I was in the express system. It was quick, the staff courteous and I like the location.

I'm really happy with the goodie bag. I like nice treats and souvenirs. *Side eye at fantasy

Costume

I played in mehtab. I liked my costume. It was exactly what they advertised. You know how that can go when bands advertise one thing and then give you something else.

Monday.

Carnival Monday was good. I liked the route. I liked that they served breakfast even after the starting point. It was easy to get drinks (even though at points the truck was moving fast). The staff on the road were good. Lunch was good and I enjoyed the rest. For me, the vibe picked up after lunch. I like that the band was not too big so there was space to play ah mas.

Tuesday.

Getting into sections to cross judging points really showed the beauty of the costumes. Food and drinks were good. Road vibe was good.

On Monday and Tuesday, I was left feeling that djs were contractually obligated to play the same 10 or so songs. Because we had good djs and I would not compute how they could be “ shelling the road” with 10 or so songs for hours. This really needs to be addressed. At points I felt like I was listening to a playlist because the songs were played in a loop. I liked that there was a rhythm section.

I liked that we crossed the savanna to both famalay and savanna grass. The socadrome was nice. I liked the big stage and the space. And I like how the music reverberated in the stadium.

Overall, I enjoyed lost tribe and would play with them again.

Band: Tribe Carnival

“Colorism in Trinidad is REAAAAAAAAAL”

I've always heard the talk but never truly felt it until this year, as this was my first year playing in frontline (private small frontline only section in Tribe). As my section finished the stage we crossed to the other side and lined up for pics. (I actually never realized this was a thing, but I happily followed suit). As I stood there smiling and posing with my co-frontliners multiple photographers swooped in to snap pics. One by one I realized that each of them (light and dark) would snap pics of the lightskin/indian appearing female to my left, stop and look at me dead in the face and then move on to snapping pics of the next light skin/indian appearing female to my right. I have to say, as this is my 8th year playing mas in Trinidad I was taken aback with how apparent and humiliating this was. It definitely placed a sour taste in my tongue and my over all joyous carnival spirit.

THEN to reach the lunch stop and receive NO food?

I won't even add to the discussion about costume break down. That was an absolute joke.

Band: Paparazzi Carnival

Registration:

I played with Paparazzi Carnival and it was everything! My friend and I registered through a concierge service called LadyBug Travel (more on our experience with her later). With Paparazzi, you are free to purchase your costume without having to go through a committee member, which I appreciated as this was my first Trinidad Carnival. We went with the concierge service to book our costumes so that we would have someone on the ground to advocate for us in the event that there were any issues and to pick up and deliver our costumes to our Airbnb. On Paparazzi's end, registration was a breeze. 10/10

Customer Service:

There was a slight hiccup where they had checked off that I ordered a size medium for my high waist bottom piece when I ordered a large. They were quick to fix it and made sure I had the correct size before I arrived in Trinidad. 10/10

Costume Fit:

My costume looked slightly different than what was shown on the model, but I still loved it. I am a 34DDD and was concerned about how the top would fit. They didn't have an option for 34DDD, so I went with my sister size (36DD). It fit perfectly! I felt so beautiful and confident in my costume. It hugged in all the right places. On the road, I only lost 2 feathers. My costume looked and felt like they had taken their time to make it. 10/10

Road Experience:

I enjoyed my road experience. Pure vibes. Music was on point (I'm Haitian and I have loved soca since I was a child but Paparazzi playing a Haitian song on the road had me extra hype lol) Great drinks. I appreciated that they always had someone from the bar roaming throughout the road passing out water and powerade. That small gesture made me appreciate them even more. They left on time both Monday and Tuesday. Meals on Wheels was good; they had doubles, roti, and aloo pie. My biggest issue was the lunch option. I wasn't a fan of it on Monday. It was rice and peas, chicken, and plantains. The flavor just wasn't there. On Tuesday, my friend and I decided to skip the lunch option and got lunch on our own on Ariapita. In terms of safety, the security was no joke and did their job. 9/10

For a first timer, I would 100% recommend Paparazzi and I plan to play with them again. I also noticed and appreciated that they had costume options for every body size. I didn't feel that way when I was researching other bands and this was one of the main reasons I decided to go with Paparazzi. My one feedback for them is that a better lunch option be offered. See you in 2021, Paparazzi! :)

Overall Experience: 9/10

Review of concierge:

Concierge isn't necessary, but as a foreigner and someone who came straight off the jumbo jet on Friday evening, having a concierge is extremely helpful. If you plan to use a concierge, I would not recommend LadyBug Travel. From what I heard in Trinidad, she has a great reputation, but the communication was lacking. We had paid for our costumes by the first week of September. By the following week, Paparazzi had posted on IG that our costume had sold out. We asked her to confirm that she had registered us. It was a constant back and forth, despite me asking her to be more transparent moving forward. We didn't get out receipts until the second week of October. The communication issues occurred up until we arrived when we found that our J'Ouvert packages had not been collected and delivered, despite her saying that she had collected and delivered everything. In the end, everything was sorted out but it was a headache.

Band: Harts Carnival

This year was my first time traveling to Trinidad & Tobago and like the Carnival chaser I am, I obviously had to play mas. I did extensive research in preparation for the season and thought I made a fantastic decision when I chose to play with HARTS. Their customer service was excellent since my emails were always answered promptly, the representatives at the distribution center were friendly and it only took 15 minutes to collect my costume. Gorgeous costume and great quality, the goody bag was nice and now I'm all pumped for the road! But WAIT, HARTS isn't an all inclusive band? And I'm finding this out now I'm in Trinidad? Now I'm contemplating whether to spend the extra \$150USD at this point.

Carnival Monday is here and I met the band at the starting point. I went to the bar hoping the bartender doesn't realize I don't have an all inclusive band and he didn't even check, so I got my drink. We started the jump and I'm ready to pump. I'm wining and throwing waist only to realize the stares I was receiving so after I had wine down on the streets of Port of Spain, I stopped and started to chip because I felt a tad judged. Shortly, I met this girl who was feeling the same as I did and she told me her friends were playing in Bliss which was directly behind us and I didn't hesitate to go. I wasn't even in HARTS for a good two hours. Got to Bliss, met her crew, they accepted me as one of their own immediately and the energy and vibes were so much better.

et back at HARTS lunch spot but got there late so only had one option which was chicken lasagna with garlic bread and corn. HARTS had one music truck, they did not have a cool down truck. After lunch it was back to Bliss straight through till sundown. I got drinks in Bliss, was able to hop on the cool down truck, no one looked at me strange for throwing waist and getting on and I was happy!

Carnival Tuesday there were more people on the road with HARTS and to be honest, the energy in the band was wayyy better. I didn't cross the Socadrome cause they did it at 8a.m and I got down the road to them at 9:30a.m. Lunch came and the variety of options were really good. From Italian, Indian and Caribbean; meat, vegetable, pescatarian and vegan choices. They had a sectioned off part for the all inclusive patrons with A/C, masseurs and their own bathrooms but for others there were tents with blankets so you could sit or lay down. There were also snow cones and snacks available. Tuesday HARTS wasn't crossing the Savannah and I decided to switch bands again to Bliss. Met up with the same group and we had a time!

Your first time is always a learning experience but because of the money I spent and playing mas alone, I wanted a bang for my buck. Next year, I will be playing with another band with more of my people (no offense) where the vibes are nothing less than contagious, allowing me to have an amazing road experience.

Scotch Krew Concierge Services

I am not sure if this is considered a "carnival review". Its more about concierge tickets and how fete culture needs a change.

I've been doing Trini carnival for 3 years now and EVERY YEAR AM BUSH is my highlight. Hey, I like to get dutty when I fete  ♀ ☒. Usually, somehow we always end up knowing somebody, that knows somebody that can get us 6-8 tickets. But this year, I guess things their circle got tighter so we were only able to get 2.

We decided to get the other 5 tickets through a concierge (Scotch Krew), that ASSURED us they would get the tickets. Most of my crew didn't come in until Carnival Friday so we had a friend in Trinidad pickup our tickets before hand on Wednesday. When he got to the distribution area that Scotch Krew told us to go to, the man said he did not have our packages that day. He informed us that he would be HAND delivering the packages to our guest house on Friday when our plane landed.

Friday comes, and I contact him early in the morning. To no avail. I KEPT contacting him and even went on Instagram to contact other members in his company (I will attach receipts). Finally, at 12am Saturday morning the man answers the phone. He lets me know that he had been at a fete all day and had missed the pickup time for AM Bush packages for concierges. So he basically messed up our Saturday morning.

Smh, fetes and concierge need to change their ways.